



FUNCTION FOLLOWS FORM

The roots of the Function Follows Form (FFF) principle

Back in the early 90's, a group of psychologists made an interesting discovery. When it comes to creating, people are innately better at uncovering the potential benefits of a given form than creating a new form to satisfy a given need. This discovery spurred a new thinking approach, called Function Follows Form, that encourages us to first create a virtual situation (form), and then to explore its potential benefits (function).

Function Follows Form as a work process

FFF is a way to overcome some of the drawbacks of research-led or design based innovation.

Conventionally, product innovation begins with consumer need identification that's then translated into functions that the product, service or process is expected to deliver. The product's form is then designed to fit these functions.

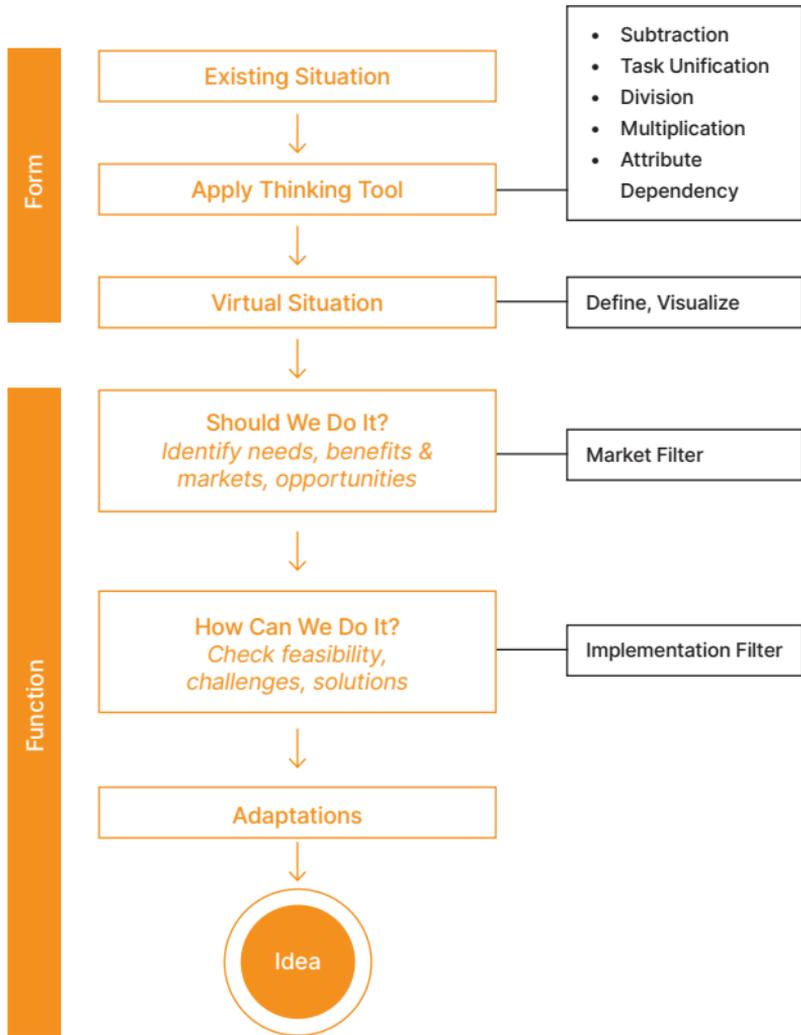
Consumers, however, struggle to articulate unmet needs, and imagining a product that does not yet exist is virtually impossible. SIT offers a back-to-front innovation approach – based on the FFF principle – that increases the chances of satisfying existing consumer needs, uncovering latent needs and even driving new ones.

The innovation process begins with an analysis of an existing situation (e.g. product components, process stages, business resources) and ends with a new idea, after weighing its potential market opportunity and feasibility considerations.

How can the FFF approach boost results?

- Visualizing the virtual situation, and deeply exploring its potential benefits, though cognitively challenging, can lead to the discovery of previously unforeseen needs, market segments and opportunities.
- New ideas tend to be practical because they are not only based on existing knowledge and capabilities, but have also been filtered for do-ability and have undergone adaptations to overcome anticipated challenges.
- It's possible to develop a long-term innovation plan or pipeline, rather than a onetime novelty, by systematically exploring many possible variations of your existing situation or product.

The FFF Workflow



Making FFF part of your innovation mindset

From penicillin to Ivory soap and chocolate chip cookies, history is full of inventions triggered by 'lucky' accidents. By innovating using the Function Follows Form process, you can systematically engineer 'lucky accidents' in your products and critically explore how to extract real market value from these.

When you start to become aware of the potential value in a product that looks a bit strange or begin to assess the possibilities in a situation that has gone bad (without outright rejecting these or trying to fix the "problem") – then you are adopting FFF as an innovation mindset!